

She was practical in many things, especially in politics and in religion. Her age reflects this fact. She admired practical wisdom, and if honest in nothing else, she was honest in her frank worldly-mindedness. She and her followers made profit and pleasure the main objectives in life and sought them openly and truthfully. The Queen's gay, pleasure-seeking temperament was innately coarse; naturally Elizabethan society was coarse also. Coarse manners often express coarser morals. As Elizabeth was fond of magnificence and display, she never appeared in public without a splendid band of followers. Her group of "gentlemen pensioners" consisted of all the young men of the noblest families in England.¹ The court was a scene of wild adventures, and every young man who could gain admission there hoped to gain the Queen's notice and secure his own fortune.

Spencer describes the courtier's position with vigorous bitterness of feeling:

'Full little knowest thou, that hast not tride
 What hell it is in suing long to bide;
 To lose good days, that might be better spent;
 To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
 To spend to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
 To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow;
 To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
 To eate thy heart through comfortlesse despair:

1. Social England, vol. III, pp 383 ff.